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UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 004041

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA, WHA/AND, WHA/CAR, WHA/EPSC, EB,  
EB/ESC/IEC/EPC, INR; NSC FOR SHANNON; USCINCSO ALSO FOR  
POLAD; TREASURY FOR OASIA:MWAFER  
USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION  
USDOC FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ENRG](#) [PREL](#) [DR](#) [EFIN](#)

SUBJECT: DOMINICANS INVITED TO SIGN PETROCARIBE ACCORD BY  
AUGUST 23

REF: A. SANTO DOMINGO 03443

[1](#)B. SANTO DOMINGO 3408

[1](#)C. SANTO DOMINGO 3121

[1](#)1. (U) Venezuelan ambassador Francisco Belisario Landis told the press on August 16 that he had delivered to the Dominican MFA copies in English and Spanish of the "Petrocaribe" agreement, with an invitation to come to Caracas by August 23 for a signing ceremony. He was emphatic about Venezuela's intentions: "Where are there any obstacles, what are the difficulties with deciding, yes or no, whether to bring the Dominican Republic into Petrocaribe? This documentation shows the will of the government of Venezuela, its positive attitude for incorporating the Dominican republic into this process called 'Petrocaribe.'" His comments responded in part to press play of a televised interview the previous evening with national refinery director Aristides Fernandez Zucco, who had commented that Petrocaribe "was designed for poor countries, not for the Dominican Republic."

[1](#)2. (U) On August 11 in an emotional extempore address to a business group in La Romana, President Fernandez said that the high price of petroleum meant that the Dominican Republic is "almost drowning." He said that he would send presidential chief of staff Danilo Medina to Caracas shortly to urge that the Petrocaribe arrangement be activated as soon as possible. On Monday, August 15, presidential press director Rafael Nunez confirmed the plan to send Medina along with Industry and Commerce Minister Javier Garcia to Caracas. Nunez said that Fernandez had telephoned Chavez during the weekend.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Labor Minister Jose Ramon Fadul told Charge and USAID officers on August 17 that when Industry and Commerce Minister Javier Garcia had last spoken with Venezuelan counterparts, they had commented that the Dominican Republic did not really fit the criteria for Petrocaribe. That was probably the observation that motivated Fernandez Zucco's remarks, as well as the rumor picked up by WHA/AND that Venezuela might be establishing a political link of some type between PETROCARIBE admission and CAFTA ratification. Note that in none of these contacts, private or public, has there been any mention of a possible linkage between the two.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Embassy's FCS office obtained a copy of the proposed Petrocaribe text from MFA contacts on August 19; the scanned text has been sent electronically to WHA/CAR (Searby), WHA/AND (McIsaac), EB/ESC/IEC/EPC (McManus) and to INR (Ben-Yehuda).  
MEIGS